

WASHINGTON, DC – The House of Representatives today passed S. 30 – the Truth in Caller ID Act – by voice vote, clearing the way for the President to sign it into law. This bill includes provisions concerning caller ID spoofing based on a bill (H.R. 1110) sponsored by Congressman Robert C. “Bobby” Scott, which was passed by the House earlier this year. The just-passed bill establishes criminal penalties for transmitting misleading or inaccurate caller identification information in order to defraud, cause harm, or wrongfully obtain anything of value. This practice is known as caller ID spoofing.

“After years of working on legislation to prohibit caller ID spoofing, I am pleased that the House and Senate have finally passed legislation making this practice illegal,” said Congressman Scott. “As technology continues to advance at a rapid pace, Congress must remain diligent to ensure that such advances do not threaten an individual’s ability to protect his or her personal information from fraud.”

Over the last few of years, spoofing technology has become readily available, either through the purchase of Internet telephone equipment or through websites specifically set up to spoof. For example, Voice-Over-Internet-Protocol (VOIP) equipment can easily be configured to replace caller ID information with information of the user’s choosing, so that the person on the receiving end of the call will see the false caller ID information.

Since caller ID spoofing can make a call appear to come from any phone number, it has the ability to mislead consumers into divulging personal and private information to the spoofer, under the mistaken belief that it is a legitimate call. For example, a spoofer may trick someone into providing bank account information by masking the caller ID information with that of a prominent bank. These types of professional deceptions can damage credit and cause financial ruin for those targeted.

Spoofing can also invade the privacy of those individuals whose caller ID is misused by others to mask fraudulent calls. For instance, one of the witnesses at the hearing on a similar bill in the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress was Phil Kiko, the House Judiciary Committee's Chief Counsel at the time, who had been a victim of such caller ID spoofing. A spoofer made harassing late night phone calls using Mr. Kiko’s caller ID information, making it appear that Mr. Kiko was making the harassing phone calls. While he had not suffered a theft of any money or tangible property, and was not directly harassed by the person who used his caller ID, Mr. Kiko and his family members were understandably irritated by numerous calls from people who were calling him as a result of his caller ID information appearing on their caller ID systems.

The Truth in Caller ID Act makes these practices a crime.

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